

D. Anderson

SOME REMARKS

— ON —

PRIMARY EDUCATION

— BY —

THE BISHOP OF RUPERT'S LAND.

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PRIMARY EDUCATION.

I have thought it might be well to publish in a separate form the remarks I made to the Synod on the subject of Primary Education. In addressing the Synod I did not think it desirable to discuss the probable change in the method of administration. I confined myself to the question of religious teaching. But identified as I have been from the beginning with the past administration of our Provincial system of education, I do not think that it will be out of place for me to make some remarks on this subject in this publication. I believe that the Board of Education has been in the execution of its trust a faithful servant of the State, and impartial in its administration. It is my opinion, too, that the State has been exceptionally well served by the successive Superintendents of Education, and I think it is a subject of regret that the Province has lost the experience and administrative ability of the late Superintendent.

There is grave objection to the Department of Education being treated like an ordinary Department of the Government. Usually there is a Minister who decides everything in his Department, and an assistant, with perhaps half the salary, who acts as Deputy Minister. But in this Department the real administrator should be, if possible, a scholar of fair if not high University attainments, well acquainted with educational questions and methods. And as his value will be largely increased by experience and knowledge of the country gained by years of office, he should be a permanent official. Now it is impossible to secure and retain a valuable man of such attainments without a liberal salary. To expect always these qualifications, even to a very moderate degree, in the statesman receiving for political reasons the Ministry of Education is out of the question. And it would scarcely be right to make such a man the mere clerk of the politician for the time in office. Besides it will be difficult for the Minister in this country to be credited with the absolute determination of all the questions rising out of school matters without giving suspicion of political partiality and embittering those

whose wishes he disregards. On the other hand, I readily admit that it would be an advantage that the Government should have a closer connection with the Board of Education than it has had in the past. The expenditure of the grant for education as proposed by the Board is now voted by the Governor-in-Council, and it seems right that the Government should thus be responsible for the expenditure. But the Board of Education feels that it is by its special information a more competent authority. Thus there is apt to be friction, if the Governor-in-Council thinks proper to reject any of the estimates or proposals of the Board. This would be avoided if, as I have suggested in the address to the Synod, one of the Ministers occupied the position of Chairman of the Board of Education.

Criticisms, that have been made on the addresses of Dr. King and myself, suggest one or two remarks. I have seen it represented that we would prefer the present system of separate schools to any merely secular system. And I do not hesitate to say that I would; but at the same time I think this an unfair way of putting the matter. There is much in the present system, that is objectionable, that could be removed. Under proper restrictions I see a measure of justice and no injustice in separate schools, and I do not think that it will be easy to do away with them. However the Roman Catholic authorities may approve of the subjects of religious teaching that Protestants would agree upon, they will accept no teachers but their own. The great majority of Roman Catholic children will, therefore, be sent to their own private schools, however inferior, rather than to State schools not under Roman Catholic instructors, whether there be religious teaching in them or not. If there is no religious teaching there will be but the stronger expression of dislike. The day will come when one, if not both political parties, will discover that it is undesirable for the State to have this inferior secular instruction, and unjust to the Roman Catholic section of the community, that while getting no State aid for its private schools it should have to

contribute to the support of the State schools. And the separate schools will reappear—possibly in an objectionable form. If Protestants allow the threatened secularization of the public schools, they may expect to see in a few years these two classes of State schools—Roman Catholic and secular. Will that be satisfactory?

It is sometimes said that the religious teaching at present in the Protestant schools does not amount to much. It is still far from sufficient, but there has been a gradual improvement. The Protestant Board of Education has, however, never been chosen to represent the opinions of the churches. I have been all along aware that several of the members did not share my views—at one time certainly I would have been in a small minority. But I have always regarded an attitude unfriendly to religious teaching in the schools for our children as so unnatural for religious men that I have hoped for the gradual overcoming of prejudices so that a more satisfactory system might be introduced. As long as the school law placed no obstacle in the way of the adoption of a fuller system of religious instruction I felt able to work on the Board, and look forward to this. I am, indeed, perfectly satisfied with the religious subjects now prescribed for the Protestant section. I wish for nothing more—only I desire them not only read or learned by heart but taught. And till this is the case, I must consider the religious teaching of our schools insufficient.

THE EXTRACT FROM ADDRESS TO THE SYNOD.

But higher education is not everything, and to-day there are circumstances that oblige me to refer to primary education. Though we have not now any Primary Schools, it is not because, in view of the Church such schools are of small importance. The day was when we had a Church primary school, wherever we had a clergyman. That was our position, when this Province was transferred to Canada and it seems probable that the Dominion intended to recognize such efforts in the past and to protect the school interests, that then existed. But our Church saw such advantages in a national system of schools, and such

reason to have confidence in the administration of it, that it went heartily into it, trusting that the schools would be worthy of a Christian people and give an education in which the first, namely the religious, interests of the children would not be lost sight of. And I may say that the only reason which has led me for so many years to give up time that I could ill spare, to be a member of the Board of Education, has been the hope that by conciliatory action I might help in securing a measure of religious instruction reasonably satisfactory at once to ourselves and the other religious bodies.

The Roman Catholic Church alone continued to have separate schools. I may be mistaken, but I am of opinion that this privilege has been so worked as to give it an undue denominational advantage. I mean that in being enabled to supply the primary education of its members, it has been helped to give cheaply a higher education, that has drawn to it Protestant children, more particularly girls. If separate schools are aided by the State, I think the State should have the same securities for a sound secular education as in its other schools. Although there are separate schools in England there is only one Council of Education; there are common qualifications for all teachers; there is one system of inspection and one body of inspectors—there is one course of education. Further, in England separate schools only receive the share of the Government grant. They get nothing from rates. This part of their support has to be supplied by voluntary contributions. If this provision be not adopted here, at any rate it should be seen that there is no opening for such an abuse as I have suggested. However desirable one system of national education may be, I think that the system of separate schools, as it exists in England, assures to the State the education it should require, and is at the same time eminently just, and one that should be open to any religious body.

The notice given to the Protestant Superintendent of Education has prepared us for some modification of the method of administration. But on this I do

not care, as Bishop, to address you. I would simply say that I consider that the best way for the administration of our schools would be to adopt the English plan. In that case one of the ministers would occupy the position, which I have had the honor to fill for so many years and preside over the Board of Education. He could thus represent and carry out the policy of the Government without any great call on his time while a permanent official, a competent scholar, well acquainted with educational questions and methods, as Deputy Minister or Superintendent of Education, could be the real administrator, and a small board of independent gentlemen, conversant with education, could still be responsible for the decisions come to.

But a more serious question is that of the education to be given in our common schools. It is certainly most desirable that the people of this country should be thoroughly amalgamated. I, therefore, greatly prefer that the young people of our communion should be educated with the other young people, with whom they will afterwards work. But we must ask what is the education to be given? Is it to be an education, that will keep out of view those Divine sanctions, which are the real foundation of morality, an education that is to take no notice of that, to which we owe our modern civilization and from which we receive the hope of our life—our Christian faith. I believe that such an education will in the end be a poor one both for the individual and the nation. The Bible reiterates, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge," and again, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." The noble question that opens the Westminster Shorter Catechism—one of the standards of the Presbyterian churches, is "what is the chief end of man?" And the answer is "To glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever." It seems a miserable education for the future of the man that could ignore the very end of his being. Education should be a training for the future help and guidance of the man in all his interests. In the present day it is too much the notion that education is the filling of the mind with information on all

possible subjects that may come in usefully, and every science and branch of knowledge puts in its claim, but after all the true education is not so much a laying in of facts as the training of the the mind for its future exercise and can that be called a wise and true training, that loses sight of the most important principles for the guidance of the man? Those who most value education, who most recognize and appreciate its tremendous power, cannot but be constrained by their sense of the danger of any defect in this. I would call attention to an important passage in the report of the late Royal Commission on Primary Education appointed in England in 1866. This Commission contained leading men of all the chief religious bodies and included prominent advocates of secular schools. But though they differed on many questions and especially on the wisest way of imparting religious knowledge, they agreed in one most remarkable conclusion. "That whilst we desire to secure for the children in the public elementary schools the best and most thorough instruction in secular subjects, suitable to their years, and in harmony with the requirements of their future life, we are also unanimously of opinion that their religious and moral training is a matter of still higher importance alike to the children, the parents and the nation." If this be admitted the first practical question seems to be how can this religious and moral training be best secured in the interest of the nation. And the conclusion of the minority, who favored more or less a secular system, seems strange—that the State is bound to promote the best secular knowledge, but that it is no concern of the State to see after the other—no concern to see after that which is admitted by them to be of the first importance for children, parents, and the nation.

Various classes of objections have been raised to religious worship and teaching in primary schools, but only one seems to me a serious one, and that is, that it is not feasible on account of our divided Christianity. Other objections seem to me without force in view of the greatness of the desired end.

Those alleging want of reality and the encouragement of hypocrisy would, I fear, equally apply to family worship and divine service. Those pointing to a lessening of the regard for the Bible are mainly imaginary. I attended a school where there was daily Bible instruction; I also attended a Sunday school, and I am perfectly unconscious of any difference with regard to the Bible in the two cases of any lessening of reverence or regard for the Bible from there being lessons from it in daily school, on the part of myself or any one having those lessons. Objections setting forth want of qualification on the part of the teachers simply point to another remedy, where this is felt to be the case. I have full confidence in the body of teachers in this province; and we may expect still greater reason for confidence when the country passes out of its pioneer stage. The minority of the English commission admit as regards England "it is with exceptional pleasure that we recall the deep impression which has been made upon us by the high moral quality of most of the teachers, whom we have examined." It will be the fault of the country if this is not the testimony, that we have a right to expect. I am sure that ordinarily we should all be only too glad of the help of the present teachers in our Sunday schools. As the eminent Principal of Queen's University, Dr. Grant, lately said: "If the teacher is an unworthy man and wishes to insinuate evil teaching, he can do so in connection with any subject. In that case he is not fit to be a teacher at all. This may be safely left in the hands of the trustees of each district." For myself, I heartily agree with the majority of the Royal Commissioners, "that it is of the highest importance that the teachers who are charged with the moral training of the scholars should continue to take part in the religious instruction and that any separation of the teacher from the religious teaching of the school would be injurious to the moral and secular training of the scholars." There is still another class of objections to religious teaching in schools on account of its insufficiency and neglect of what is considered the proper aim of

religious teaching. Now, as far as results are concerned, I am afraid the same objection might be raised to the Sunday school instruction, which those objectors would depend on. There may, indeed, be the best religious teaching applied most tenderly to the heart and conscience and yet there may be no loving response from the heart of the child to God. "Thy face, God, will I seek." But while we look to God's grace for the changing of the heart and drawing it to love and serve God, still we find that the Spirit of God deals with us as reasonable beings and a provision of knowledge of the things of God is a divine preparation for the soil receiving the good seed. The Eunuch of Ethiopia was prepared for the message of Philip by an acquaintance with the prophecies of Isaiah. "How shall they believe in Him, of whom they have not heard." The makers of this class of objections think little of any religious instruction, which is not an application of certain special portions of God's truth to the heart. In that I differ from them. I think there is great value in the acquisition of the information given us in the Bible and in the inculcation of morality from its divine source. So far I would agree with these objectors that it is not desirable that religious teaching according to their view should be a subject of daily practice. That I would leave largely to the Sunday school, though the judicious and faithful teacher will make use of proper opportunity. I am quite conscious that, as there may always be too much of the best, so there may be too much of religious teaching. The time given to it should be carefully limited and the subjects should be largely historical.

But even those, who favor secular schools, feel the necessity of some moral training. The minority of the Royal Commissioners give a long list of moral duties, that they would enforce on the children. Most of the English School Boards have regular religious instruction, but the Birmingham Board is an exception. It has replaced the Word of God by "outlines" of lessons on honesty, truthfulness, obedience to parents, and some 40 moral duties. Let

us see the working of such a system, where it is in full force as in the Australian colony of Victoria. An inspector, we are told, when examining the children in a primary school asked the question "Why should we obey our parents?" The child referred to the divine sanction of the 5th Commandment. The Inspector replied—that he could not give any marks—the answer should have been, "because they feed, clothe, and educate me." Thus you see in this system obedience to parents is simply a moral duty as taught by the natural conscience—what is the real worth of this? When Bishop Horden began to teach the Indians of Rupert's House, he gave them a lesson on the 5th Commandment. He had four men of the tribe placed before him. He asked the first who killed his father, the second who killed his mother, and so on. Each answered 'I did,' and we are told, the confession excited no feeling in the crowded building. It had been the way of the tribe. When old people became a burden to the wandering family, they were told they had lived long enough and were put out of the way. We, indeed, beloved brethren, strike at the whole edifice of our morality, when we remove this foundation—"Thus saith the Lord." How often in the history of the world has this sentence of Holy Scripture been realized: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." The conclusion of the majority of the Royal Commissioners seems unanswerable: "That the only safe foundation, on which to construct a theory of morals, or to secure high moral conduct, is the religion, which our Lord Jesus Christ has taught the world. That as we look to the Bible for instruction concerning morals and take its words for the declaration of what is morality, so we look to the same inspired source for the sanctions, by which men may be led to practise, what is there taught, and for instruction concerning the helps by which they may be enabled to do what they have learned to be right." It is very pleasant to find the Bishop of London, of the Church of England, Cardinal Manning and the Duke of Norfolk, of the Church, of Rome, Dr. Rigg, an eminent Methodist

minister, and other leading clergymen and laymen of the various religious bodies uniting in this important statement.

Now how is adequate religious instruction to be given, if not in the primary schools? The answer is, in the home and in Sunday schools. I think we may soon satisfy ourselves that the home instruction would be very limited. As the Bishop of Rochester once said: "There are three things requisite for adequate instruction in religious as in other knowledge—leisure, capacity, and inclination." In how many a home would one or more of these necessary conditions be wanting? Alas! In these busy days in how few homes would they be combined? The instruction in Sunday schools is of course of great value, but that value is immeasurably increased where there is careful instruction in the day school. But at best it would be very partial in its extent and often, as we have reason to regret, not very efficient. As regards England, the Commissioners report "that the evidence does not warrant the conclusion that religious and moral training can be amply provided otherwise than through the medium of elementary schools. That in the case of a considerable number of children, if they do not receive religious instruction and training from the teachers in the public elementary schools, they will receive none, and that this would be a matter of gravest concern to the State."

It is true that in this country the full effect of a secular system of education will not be immediately felt. We have a fine body of settlers. There probably is no town in which the people attend church better than in Winnipeg. I presume that in our present towns most of the children attend Sunday School, and though in the country districts they can only to a limited extent do this owing to the distance of children from Sunday Schools, yet the feeling would be in favor of attendance. But this country will not always be in this happy condition. We must look forward to larger populations and careless classes, as seen not only in the old countries of

Europe, but in the United States. And then the result will be deplorable. We see in France secular education in its full development. "Not only is no word of religion taught, but the very name of God is in strictness forbidden to be uttered." Is it strange that unbelievers themselves almost tremble for the future of that country. The master of one of the schools in Paris, himself a professed materialist, when questioned said that he believed that in 10 years few of the boys in his school would even know the name of Christ otherwise than as a matter of history, and that he himself even viewed with apprehension the consequences of such a change, for although a materialist, he felt by no means certain that materialism would be capable of supplying the wants of a nation.

But it may be thought that there is no danger in a British colony of going on to this extreme. It is, dear brethren, only the legitimate end of the secular system.

I have already referred to the colony of Victoria. The school system there is not yet absolutely 'godless,' as in France. It has yet only reached the stage of being 'Christless,' but it is stated that it has been seriously proposed to make the thin Theism still left in the text books still thinner by "omitting any statements that might be offensive to our Chinese fellow-citizens." But though the name of God is not yet forbidden, how Christ, our Saviour, seems to be dishonored! One of the Text-books in English contains Longfellow's little ballad "The Wreck of the Hesperus." But it is given in a mutilated form. The touching stanza of the child in its distress has been cut out:

"Then the maiden clasped her hands and
prayed that saved she might be,
And she thought of Christ, who stilled the
wave on the Lake of Galilee."

It is said by an Australian contributor to the London Spectator that all similar references to Christ and Christianity have been removed, and that Messrs.

Nelson & Sons, the publishers, have had to publish special editions of their school series for this colony, carefully purged of all taint of Christian fact and sentiment. Thus that blessed name, which is above every name, is practically treated like an improper passage in a heathen Latin writer. Surely a Christian may well say that an enemy hath done this. It was not by such faint-hearted Christianity, that our religion spread in its first days and our fathers got the faith. In face of such a fact we may well ask, are we, the Christians of to-day, at all awake to the preciousness of what has been committed to us? Do we understand the vast responsibility that rests upon us? What a condemnation the possibility of such results is of our divided Christianity! How it calls on us to enter our inner chamber and pray the last prayer of our Lord with His disciples before His death "that they all may be one, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." And how strange it is even from a literary point of view that in a day when information of all kinds is crowded in on the pupils, it should be thought proper to withhold the information which is absolutely necessary for the intelligent reading of all our literature! Fancy a reader of Milton ignorant of the facts of the Bible!

I have left myself little space to speak of that, which is the really formidable objection that it is not feasible with our divided Christianity to formulate a scheme of religious teaching, which will be acceptable to all the religious bodies. With regard to this I simply say that I think there should be no difficulty in drawing up a scheme, giving a very considerable—to my mind a very adequate—amount of religious teaching, which should not be inconsistent with the teaching of any of the chief bodies. In the first place, I give my entire adhesion to the following resolution, which I understood was passed unanimously at the last general assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Canada: "The general assembly still adheres firmly to the belief that the Bible should be made in the public schools the

object of regular systematic instruction, and rejoices to believe that a rule to this effect, combined with a conscience clause, giving full relief to every objector, and with a clause empowering trustees to dispense with such instruction when they consider it expedient, would be most acceptable to the different branches of the Christian church." I think it perfectly possible to agree on an adequate selection of lessons that might be taken either from the authorized English version, the Douay version, or a French version, as trustees of any school might prefer. In the second place, I approve of a second resolution of the Assembly: "The General Assembly acknowledges receipt of a communication from the Anglican Synod of the Diocese of Toronto on the subject of religious instruction in the public schools of Ontario, and expresses its sympathy with the object therein contemplated." The communication referred to suggested the preparation by representatives of the several religious bodies of a "Short Compendium of the Chief Truths of Christian Faith and Practise." This I should like to see. I think the compendium better be confined to the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments—which are the common heritage of all Christendom. Such a manual would probably by no means contain all even in these that everyone could wish said but it could contain the chief truths of our Faith and yet have nothing objectionable. Further teaching could be given in Sunday Schools or when young people are prepared for Confirmation or the Lord's Supper.

The General Assembly appointed a committee, which among other duties, had to take steps to secure the co-operation of other branches of the Christian Church. I should be very glad, if we were to intimate to their authorities here our desire to co-operate. Dear brethren in the Lord, we are a Christian people, and should be very jealous of our faith. This is the divine assurance: "Them that honor Me, I will honor."

There can be nothing unreasonable in this that we should require in the education of our young people

that which we regard as of primary importance for their future. There may be Jews, and other unbelievers in Christ wishing to send their children to the public schools—there should be a stringent clause protecting their children from the religious instruction and, guaranteeing that they suffer in no way from this.

The Roman Catholic Church might give its sympathy and aid in all that I propose, but we cannot look for this. In that case I simply say that I should infinitely prefer that the Roman Catholic Church should continue to have separate schools under satisfactory conditions for the State to our schools being without religious instruction.

I have taken up a longer time than I like in speaking on this important subject. I hold no extreme views on this question. On the contrary I am very conscious in addressing you that there are not many likely to fill my position, who may be expected to take a broader and more generous view of secular education or be more averse to giving to children unsuitable and excessive dogmatic teaching. And therefore, some weight may be given to my words when I say that the establishment of a system of secular instruction means, I doubt not, a ceaseless agitation. At the present moment the members of the Church of England in England are paying yearly three millions of dollars (£600,000) in voluntary subscriptions to support 11,890 separate schools for 2,606,880 children in schools built by voluntary subscriptions, to the amount of 70 millions of dollars, (£14,000,000). The members of our church here may not have much of this spirit at present, or, if they have, may not be able to show it, but the day may be expected to come when they will. Having spoken already at such length I cannot touch on other matters to-day. I desire, then, simply to commend our deliberations to the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, that our Church may be an instrument for promoting the glory of God and the salvation of men.

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